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AUTHOR Quigley, Denise D.
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ABSTRACT

On the assumption that students are more successful if their parents participate at school and encourage education and learning at home, the Los Angeles Metropolitan Project granted funds to 29 Los Angeles schools for the Parents as Learning Partners (PLP) Project. This initiative focuses on three primary areas in which parents and teachers can work together to support children's academic progress: (1) communication; (2) parenting; and (3) learning at home. Schools receive PLP funding to initiate parent training workshops and professional development to increase parent involvement as well as install voicemail systems to increase and improve the communication between parents and teachers, especially with regard to issues surrounding homework and academics. The PLP initiative proved to have an impact on third graders' student behavior, homework, and performance; on communication patterns of their parents and teachers; and on the children's interactions with their parents concerning learning in the home. Overall, the evaluation results indicated positive changes in teachers and parents of third graders in the PLP schools, with a higher acceptance of their joint responsibility for children in getting a good education. There was less decline in parent involvement and support in PLP schools than in non-PLP schools as the children moved from second to third grade. There was higher reading achievement in PLP schools than in comparison schools. Links between specific PLP activities, positive changes in parents and teachers, and student performance were not clear. Information on the evaluation design and comparison group methodology are appended. (Contains 29 references.) (KB)

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Parents and Teachers Working Together to Support Third Grade Achievement: Parents as Learning Partners (PLP) Findings

Denise D. Quigley
University of California, Los Angeles

Version: March 2000

Denise Quigley

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ABSTRACT

As a society, we strongly believe that it is beneficial for parents to be involved in their children's education. Increasing amounts of research also support the value of parent involvement and its impact on student achievement. As Epstein and Dauber (1993) state, children are more successful students at all grade levels if their parents participate at school and encourage education and learning at home. Clark (1993) also finds positive associations between parent involvement, especially parental attitudes toward homework, and students' mathematics and literacy skills. In addition, Ames, et al. (1995) state that children's motivation, attitudes toward parent involvement, and perceptions of their parents' level of involvement are more positive when their parents receive frequent communications from the teacher. Therefore, a key element through which parental involvement impacts student achievement is two-way communication between parents and teachers whereby they share common expectations and responsibility for the child's learning. As a base, the parent must support the learning of the child in the home and the teacher must provide high expectations and support for learning at school. (Epstein, 1995; Chavkin, 1993 ; Ames, et al, 1995;).

The Los Angeles Metropolitan Project in an effort to have schools work more collaboratively with parents surrounding academic issues granted funds to 29 schools in Los Angeles County under the program known as Parents as Learning Partners (PLP). The PLP initiative focuses on three primary areas in which parents and teachers can work together to support children's academic progress: communication, parenting, and learning at home. Schools are receiving PLP funding to initiate parent training/workshops and professional development to increase parent involvement as well as install voicemail systems to increase and improve the communication between parent and teachers, particularly surrounding homework and academics. This paper describes the PLP initiative and its impact on third graders student behavior, homework, and performance; on communication patterns of their parents and teachers; and on the child's interactions with their parents surrounding learning in the home.

Parents and Teachers Working Together to Support Third Grade Achievement: Parents as Learning Partners (PLP) Findings

Denise D. Quigley

Introduction

As a society, we strongly believe that it is beneficial for parents to be involved in their children's education. Increasing amounts of research also support the value of parent involvement and its impact on student achievement. As Epstein and Dauber (1993) state, children are more successful students at all grade levels if their parents participate at school and encourage education and learning at home. Clark (1993) also finds positive associations between parent involvement, especially parental attitudes toward homework, and students' mathematics and literacy skills. In addition, Ames, et al. (1995) state that children's motivation, attitudes toward parent involvement, and perceptions of their parents' level of involvement are more positive when their parents receive frequent communications from the teacher. Therefore, a key element through which parental involvement impacts student achievement is two-way communication between parents and teachers whereby they share common expectations and responsibility for the child's learning. As a base, the parent must support the learning of the child in the home and the teacher must provide high expectations and support for learning at school. (Epstein, 1995; Chavkin, 1993 ; Ames, et al, 1995;).

Background

Walter H. Annenberg announced his plan to give $500 million to our nation's public schools in December 1993[1]; this was the largest gift ever of its kind. With these funds, the Annenberg Foundation hoped to enhance the capacities of public education systems throughout the country and ultimately enable students to leave public schools with high intellectual, moral and social abilities. Seven metropolitan areas accepted the Annenberg Challenge and received grants to improve urban education[2]. These include Chicago, Los Angeles, Philadelphia, New York City, San Francisco Bay area, Boston, and Detroit.

In general, the Annenberg Foundation challenged these urban communities to develop high-quality schools by:

- Setting high academic expectations for all students
- Assessing student learning and using this information to improve learning
- Creating School Families, a collection of schools in a feeder pattern from elementary, middle, to high school, where students are well known

[1] *Annenberg Challenge News*, Summer 1996. Providence, RI: Brown University.

[2] The Annenberg Foundation also supports a similar effort focused on rural public education.

- Develop resources and authority at the local level so that school staff are flexible to develop quality programs appropriate to their student populations
- Mobilize community support for School Families

Spearheaded by leadership in professional, academic, and business communities, a coalition of educators and civil leaders in Los Angeles County established the Los Angeles Annenberg Metropolitan Project (LAAMP) to take up the Annenberg Challenge in Los Angeles County. The primary goal was to "fundamentally improve the education of child in this county".[3] In January 1995, LAAMP was awarded a $53 million grant for a five-year period, extending through the year 2000. Combined with matching resources, which must be from private, non-public sources, the hope was to invest at least $106 million in the 14 participating School Families across 10 school districts. This involved 124 schools, 3,800 teachers, and over 106,000 students from kindergarten through 12th grade.

The Los Angeles Metropolitan Project (LAAMP), in an effort to have schools work more collaboratively with parents surrounding academic issues, granted funds matched by the Weingart Foundation to 29 schools in three School Families in Los Angeles County. The grant focused on three primary areas in which parents and teachers can work together to support children's academic progress: communication, parenting, and learning at home. This effort is entitled Parents as Learning Partners (PLP). The PLP initiative recognized that when parents and teachers share common responsibility and expectations, assist each other in providing learning experiences, and establish two-way communication, students will develop better work habits toward homework, behavior, and achievement.

Conceptual framework and approach to evaluation

LAAMP and PLP's theory of how parent involvement impacts student achievement has been adapted from Joyce Epstein's research on parent involvement.[4] Epstein (1995) states that there are *overlapping spheres of influence* in a child's education: the family and the school.[5] Within the family, the parents and whole family interact with the child. Within the school, the teachers and the whole school influence the child. The child's learning is enhanced when these two spheres overlap, and the teachers and parents within their family and school hold a shared responsibility for helping the child learn. Parents and teachers establish and share common expectations for the child. They also establish a two-way means of communicating, as well as assist each other in providing learning experiences for the child. The partnership formed between parents and teachers

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[3] LAAMP proposal submitted to the Annenberg Foundation, November 1994.

[4] Epstein outlines six types of parent involvement: communicating, parenting, volunteering, decision making, leading, and learning at home; however, Weingart through PLP emphasizes only the three that focus more directly on parents and teachers supporting a child's academic progress: communicating, parenting, and learning at home.

[5] Epstein, J. L. (1995). School/family/community partnerships: Caring for the children we share. *Phi Delta Kappan, 76*, 701-712.

is based on shared knowledge, actions, and expectations. This type of partnership between the parents and teachers then results in a supportive and consistent learning environment for the child, which in turn encourages better attendance and homework habits. Over time, the cumulative effect of better attendance, more attention to studies, consistent expectations, and regular support should improve achievement and grades. Therefore, PLP's goals are to impact students through the change in behavior, perception, and attitude of parents and teachers in the PLP program.

In addition, particular parent-child interactions in the home influence children's success in the classroom. Two dimensions of parental behaviors -- support and pressure -- have been identified as important influences on social competence and improved achievement (Baumrind, 1987). In sum, children need encouragement and reinforcement of skills at home to perform well in school. To do this, parents need to read to their children, engage them in educational games, and enforce rules about homework. Furthermore, parents and teachers need to communicate about what is expected of the student, what is being taught in the class, and what the parent can do to help the child at home. Sending consistent messages from both the teacher and the parent are important to children's self esteem, particulary in terms of a child's perception of parental acceptance (Kawash, Kerr, and Clews, 1985; Morvitz and Motta, 1992) and parental support (Amato, 1989). This type of parent-teacher communication informs parents about what assistance a child needs at home to support a child's learning at school.

The PLP program has specific elements targeted toward overlapping a child's spheres of influence. PLP's theory of action is to target both parents and teachers to increase the interaction between them concerning academics and learning. PLP intends to improve parenting, increase communication, and support learning at home through **professional development** for teachers on how to incorporate parents into the classroom, how to contact parents, home-learning activities, and volunteer strategies; **parent education** for parents on how to communicate with teachers, asses student work, help with homework and reading, as well as computer training; as well as **school services** such as voicemail for teachers to increase communication between parents and teachers; lending libraries for parents to increase the amount of reading in the home; and computer lending programs for parents.

The evaluation is designed to evaluate the operation and impact of PLP. Adopting a comparison group approach, the evaluation centers on the change in parents and teachers that could then lead to change in the performance, attitude, and behaviors of children.

The evaluation approach integrates a longitudinal and a quasi-experimental design with a range of data sources, including teacher survey, parent phone survey, interviews, informal site visits, and collection of archival data. The effects of PLP are assessed primarily through a comparison group methodology of tracking parent-child pairs overtime. We describe the differences in outcomes and measures across students, parents, and teachers in PLP and non-PLP schools as well as test for the statistical significance between the two populations. The difference between the Non-PLP and PLP findings were tested

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for statistical significance (at the p=0.01 level) using a chi-square test or anova t-test, as appropriate. These tests indicate the probability that the observed differences are due to chance. In addition, we also examine the change of these measures overtime: we have teacher measures from the Fall and Spring of the student's third grade year as well as we have parent measures from when their child was in second grade and in third grade. The overtime trends of these measures can be compared across the PLP and Non-PLP students and parents to establish patterns and potential impact of PLP on student behaviors and performance. Moreover within a regression framework, we estimate the effect of the PLP program on student outcomes of homework completion and performance, discipline/behavior, and overall math and reading performance. Background characteristics of the parents and students are used as controls in the regressions. The regression analyses were conducted to investigate the relationship between student achievement and parent involvement controlling for a variety of student and teacher characteristics. Based on these analyses, the results examine the similarities and differences between Non-PLP and PLP comparison parent responses as well as the Non-PLP and PLP comparison teacher responses about themselves and parents' third grade children.

Evaluation Questions

The evaluation centers around three evaluation questions:

- What are the effects of PLP on third grade teacher's practices?
- What is the impact of PLP activities on parents?
- What is the effect of PLP on student's third grade achievement?

The unit of analysis for the evaluation is the individual, whether a parent, teacher, or child. Analyses are conducted comparing Non-PLP and PLP groups of either parents, teachers or students. Refer to Appendix A for details on the evaluation design, comparison group methodology, data sources and data collection.

Results and Significance:

What are the effects of PLP on third grade teacher's practices?

Third grade teachers from the twelve schools participating in the Parents as Learning Partners evaluation completed surveys in the Fall and Spring of the 1998-1999 academic year. The teachers reported information on general classroom characteristics, parent involvement practices, as well as student characteristics and behaviors. Overall, the Non-PLP and PLP classrooms involved in the evaluation for the 1998-1999 school year were similar to each other in student, teacher and classroom characteristics. Non-PLP and PLP classrooms have very comparable students in terms of their demographic background, English skills, motivation, and homework completion. Teachers and parents of students in both the Non-PLP and PLP schools therefore would tend to have similar challenges and student issues to work out and work through in the classroom and at the school. Overall, the similarity in Non-PLP and PLP classrooms validates the ability to make comparisons across important measures of change in Non-PLP and PLP parents, teachers, and students.

First of all, one-quarter (24.9 percent) of the Non-PLP and half (56.2 percent) of the PLP third grade students had teachers who participated in professional development on parent involvement (Refer to Table 1). Thus, significantly more students in third grade PLP classrooms had teachers who had professional development on parental involvement offered to them by their schools and, more importantly, twice as many PLP students had teachers who participated in this type of professional development as compared to Non-PLP students. However, half of the teachers in PLP schools and practically all of the Non-PLP teachers who are motivated to involve parents in their classrooms felt that their schools were not preparing them on how to involve parents.

Secondly, three-fourths of students in PLP schools have teachers who use the voicemail system in their school as compared to students in Non-PLP schools who have teachers that do not use their voicemail at all to assist in communicating with their student's parents (Refer to Table 2). Primarily, the voicemail is used as a device for leaving message for teachers by the parents.

Overall, the changes in teachers' beliefs appear to be similar in direction and size across Non-PLP and PLP teachers, with small differences favoring the PLP group (Refer to Table 3). In general by Spring1999, more PLP teachers as compared to Non-PLP teachers have a basic belief that parental involvement is an important element for children to learn. Overall, there is a higher acceptance of responsibility of teachers at PLP schools to support and ensure that a child gets a good education. But this did not seem to translate into a belief that more effort should be devoted to involving parents.

PLP teachers reported a slightly better communication relationship with their parents as compared to the Non-PLP teachers (Refer to Table 4). The majority of Non-PLP and PLP teachers in the Fall and Spring reported that their communication with parents was for information purposes only. Moreover, a significant minority of teachers (23 percent of Non-PLP and 30.8 percent of PLP) reported an interactive, 2-way communication pattern with their parents, with PLP teachers significantly more likely to report such communications.

Teachers also reported the types of activities they use to involve parents in their child's education. Roughly a third (36 percent) of both Non-PLP and PLP students had teachers who reported using a combination of methods including interactive homework, children reading to parents, requiring that homework is signed by parents and contacting parents by phone calls or letters home. One quarter of Non-PLP and a third of PLP students had teachers who reported only using interactive homework as a parent involvement practice. Only 7.7 percent of Non-PLP and 3.6 percent of PLP students had teachers who responded that they did not use any practices to involve parents.

As reported by parents, fewer PLP parents (69 percent) as compared to Non-PLP parents (83 percent) report that their child's third grade teacher calls them on the phone or sends a note. This data indicates that contact among parents and teachers in terms of work and feedback are similar across PLP and Non-PLP teachers, although more Non-PLP teachers tend to contact their parents individually via the phone or a note (Refer to Table 5). In sum, however, PLP has positively impacted teachers and their interaction with parents.

What is the impact of PLP activities on parents?

Most of the parents in the Non-PLP and PLP schools, as reported through the parent phone survey, knew that their schools provided parent education workshops, a newsletter/bulletin, and access to a parent center, although much fewer actually made use of these available services (Refer to Table 6). More parents knew about the availability of parent education workshops and the newsletter or bulletin in the Spring of 1999 as compared to the Spring of 1998. But despite more parents knowing about the availability of services, fewer parents overall participated in parent workshops, attended computer training, or visited the parent center in 1998/1999 than in 1997/1998.

Of those parents who have used the services, both PLP and Non-PLP parents share similarly high levels of satisfaction with their parent centers and their school's newsletter or bulletin (Refer to Table 7). However, significantly more PLP parents are satisfied with the parent training and education workshops: 82 percent of PLP parents who attend the workshops believe that 'parent training is helpful/worth my time' as compared to 64 percent of Non-PLP parents. Significantly more PLP parents as compared to Non-PLP parents reported that workshops on various topics were helpful, including those on helping child with school work, communicating with teacher and staff, understanding what is expected of the child, learning parent/child activities for the home, and introduction to school policies and programs. These are all areas of emphasis in the PLP initiative.

Parents in general believed that it is 'both the school and family's job to make sure that a child gets a good education' (Refer to Table 8). Significantly more PLP parents (59 percent) as compared to Non-PLP parents (45 percent) believed that it was an equal responsibility of both the school and family. Along the same line, significantly fewer PLP parents (16 percent) as compared to Non-PLP parents (28 percent) believed that it is the job of the school and teachers. Overall, this indicates a higher acceptance of responsibility from PLP parents for their children getting a good education.

In general parental involvement was fairly low (Refer to Table 9 and Table 10). In both Non-PLP and PLP classrooms teachers reported that only about 10 percent of their parents volunteered at least once over the course of the year. Also Non-PLP teachers reported that 43 percent of their parents had visited or helped in their classroom at least once during the year and PLP teachers reported that 41.2 percent of their parents had visited or helped in the classroom. Similarly, according to the parent phone survey conducted in the Spring of 1999, 39.0 percent of the parents in non-PLP schools and 47 percent of parents in PLP schools reported that they had visited or helped in the classroom at their child's school. Note that both estimates, however, show advantage for PLP schools. Furthermore despite the teacher reported low levels of involvement by parents, a large number of parents were rated as 'somewhat involved' or 'very involved' in the academic performance of their child.

Moreover, parents of both Non-PLP and PLP third grade students tend to visit or help out in their child's classroom less often than when their child was in second grade (Refer to Table 10). However, the decline from second to third

grade in parents visiting or helping in the classroom (at least once) was significantly less for PLP parents. In addition Non-PLP and PLP parents did maintain a similar level of involvement in school-wide events and maintained a similar number acquaintances (2.5) with school staff other than child's teacher as their children moved from second to third grade.

In terms of interactions with their child at home, more Non-PLP and PLP parents talk about school with their child every day in the third grade than in the second grade and fewer Non-PLP and PLP parents do chores with their child every day (Refer to Table 11). Similarly small percentages of both Non-PLP and PLP parents go to the library every day or several times a week, 7 percent and 8 percent every day, respectively. Both Non-PLP and PLP parents also checked out on average 3 books from the library in a regular outing to the library with their child. But, significantly more PLP parents (73 percent) as compared to Non-PLP parents (67 percent) borrowed books or other educational materials from their child's school.

In terms of parents' behaviors surrounding homework, significantly more PLP parents (70 percent) as compared to Non-PLP parents (62 percent) review a child's homework every day in the third grade (Refer to Table 12). But a similar number of both Non-PLP (50 percent) and PLP (51 percent) parents helped their child with their homework every day in the third grade. Fewer parents in both the Non-PLP and PLP parents helped their children with their homework every day in the third grade (Spring 1999) as compared to in the second grade (Spring 1998). The number of PLP parents who helped their child with homework every day dropped significantly from the second to the third grade: from 70 percent of PLP parents to 51 percent of PLP parents.

Furthermore, Non-PLP parents and PLP parents differ in the frequency in which they sign and return their child's homework to the teacher. More Non-PLP parents (39 percent) signed and returned homework to the child's teacher every day as compared to PLP parents (25 percent), while more PLP parents (36 percent) signed and returned the homework to the child's teacher several times a week as compared to Non-PLP parents (27 percent). But a similar number of Non-PLP and PLP parents have their child's homework require their participation to complete it.

Reading habits of Non-PLP and PLP parents do not seem to differ in the third grade in terms of how often someone is available to help their child with reading, the parent reading aloud to the child in English, or having the child tell the parent a story that he or she has read (Refer to Table 13). However the frequency in which parents read to their child or have them read aloud in a language other than English is different. The same number of Non-PLP and PLP parents read *every day* in third grade with their child and read *every day* aloud with their child in a language other than English. But more PLP parents as compared to Non-PLP parents read with their child and read aloud with their child in a language other than English *several times a week*. Overall, slightly more PLP parents read to their child more frequently as compared to Non-PLP parents, despite the overall decline in parents reading every day with their child from second to third grade.

From second to third grade, more parents in both Non-PLP and PLP schools report having books in the home in English and reading to their child in English. In both second and third grade, similar percentages of Non-PLP and PLP parents have books in the home in English and read to their child in English.

What is the effect of PLP on student's third grade achievement?

First of all in the Fall of 1998, 46 percent of both Non-PLP and PLP students were working 'at or above grade level'. Teachers in both PLP and non-PLP schools also reported that half of their students (52.5 percent of Non-PLP students and 52.2 percent of PLP students) were working 'at their ability'. Both groups of teachers reported that about one third of their students (33.1 and 32.7% for PLP an non-PLP respectively) were working 'below their ability', whereas the remaining 14.9 percent of Non-PLP and 14.7 percent of PLP students were rated as working 'above their ability'. This is important to assess considering teachers primarily group students during reading instruction in terms of ability. During 1998/99 all third grade teachers in both PLP and Non-PLP schools (100% of Non-PLP and 95.6% of PLP) incorporated guided reading groups into their reading instruction and the majority of the students (88.3 percent) in guided reading groups in both PLP and Non-PLP classrooms were grouped by their teachers according to their ability.

Besides the reading environment, reading performance levels for the third graders in the Non-PLP and PLP classrooms also appears similar over the course of the year. Almost half of both Non-PLP and PLP students, 46.1 percent and 45.4 percent respectively, were reading at a beginning third grade level in the Fall of 1998 and by the Spring of 1999 half of Non-PLP and PLP third grade students were reading at the end of third grade level: 50.6 percent of Non-PLP and 49.8 percent of PLP. The average classroom reading level for both Non-PLP and PLP students in the Fall of 1998 was 2.7[6] and by Spring of 1999, it was 3.3[7] for both Non-PLP and PLP students. In the Fall 1998, the third grade teachers evaluated the students in their classroom in a range from 1.2 to 3.5 in both the Non-PLP and PLP schools. In the spring 1999, the reading levels ranged from 2 to 3.8 for Non-PLP schools and from 0 (emergent English) to 4.2 for PLP schools.

Additionally, PLP and Non-PLP third graders have similar ratings by their teachers across several reading and math measures. Table 14 outlines Non-PLP and PLP third graders standing in reading decoding in the Fall and Spring, standing in reading comprehension in the Spring of 1999, regular completion of reading homework in the Fall and Spring, regular completion of math homework in the Fall and Spring, standing in reading homework performance in the Fall and in the Spring and standing in math homework performance in the Fall and in the Spring, as evaluated by their teachers. The Non-PLP and PLP third graders have similar ratings across all the reading measures as evaluated by their teachers. In terms of math, PLP and Non-PLP students have similar standings in math and standing in math homework performance in the Fall and the Spring.

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[6] Reading level was measured by teachers running records. (2.7 indicates second year/seventh month)

[7] Two PLP teachers reported that the classroom reading level of their classes as emergent English, 0. When these two classes are included the reading level for PLP students is 3.1.

But significantly more PLP students than Non-PLP students regularly completed their math homework 'moderately well to very well' in the Spring although they had similar completion rates in the Fall. In sum, Non-PLP and PLP students are performing at similar math and reading levels.

Teachers also evaluated students on various behavior scales including behavior in class, achievement attitudes and motivation. Table 15 shows the percent of third graders in Non-PLP and PLP classrooms with disruptive behavior problems, poor work habits in reading and in math, poor motivation to achieve in reading or in math. In the Spring 1999, 17 percent of both Non-PLP and PLP students were rated by their teachers as being disruptive in class. A similar percentage of students were reported to have poor work habits in math and reading as well as low motivation to achieve in either subjects. Twenty percent of both Non-PLP and PLP students were reported to have poor work habits in math. Similarly, 25.7 percent of Non-PLP and 22.6 percent of PLP students were reported as having poor work habits in reading. Teachers also reported that very few students have a 'moderate to very serious problem' in their motivation to achieve in math: 18.4 percent of Non-PLP students and 16.3 percent of PLP students. Similarly, in terms of reading motivation 19.2 percent of Non-PLP students and 16.2 percent of PLP students were reported as 'poorly motivated' to achieve. The large proportion of students, however, are reported as to 'not having a problem at all' in terms of their motivation to achieve in math: 60.4 percent of Non-PLP and 62.7 percent of PLP students. Again, 57.8 percent of Non-PLP and 61.7 percent of PLP students were reported to 'not having a problem at all' in terms of their motivation to achieve in reading. Overall, the majority of the students (roughly 60 percent) in both Non-PLP and PLP schools were rated by their teachers as not a having problems in achievement related behaviors.

More students however tend to complete their homework in both math or reading in the beginning of the year, but Non-PLP and PLP students complete their homework at similar rates. In the Fall of 1998, 84 percent of Non-PLP and PLP students regularly completed their homework in math. Similarly, 79.5 percent of the Non-PLP and 83.7 percent of PLP students regularly completed their homework in reading. The number of students who completed their homework decreased significantly as reported by teachers in the Spring 1999: only 25.5 percent on Non-PLP and 31.7 percent of PLP regularly completed their homework in math. 30.5 percent of the Non-PLP and 32.7 percent of the PLP students regularly completed their homework in reading.

In sum, Non-PLP and PLP students are similar in their math and reading performance, motivation, and homework completion by the Spring of 1999 as evaluated by their teachers.

In addition to the performance measures reported by the third grade teachers in the Fall and the Spring, achievement data on student's test scores were obtained. School level data was available for all twelve schools, whereas the individual test score information was only available for the 8 LAUSD schools which could then be linked to student demographic information, the teacher survey data, and the parent phone survey data. Therefore, the results reported here are preliminary findings and need to be re-run with a complete set of data

from Long Beach and LAUSD schools. The regression models also need to be refined and the interpretations of coefficients strengthened. This limited sample however did allow for detailed analyses of the relationship between student achievement and parent involvement, which are all preliminary results. Table 16 presents the percent at or above the 50th percentile in language arts, math, and reading for all third grade students in the Non-PLP and PLP schools that took the SAT 9 in 1998/99. Table 17 outlines this same data for only the third graders in the Non-PLP and PLP schools that were in the sample in LAUSD schools. Table 18 presents the mean percentile scores on the SAT9 for the third graders in the sample for LAUSD only.

Overall, a slightly higher percent of PLP as compared to Non-PLP third grade students scored at or above the 50th NPR in language arts, math and reading on the SAT9 test in 1998/99. But there was only a significantly higher percent of PLP third graders scoring at or above the 50th NPR in math as compared to Non-PLP third graders. These data also are for all third grade students who took the SAT9 in the 12 Non-PLP and PLP schools, not just the random sample of students who were tracked in these 12 evaluation sites. Table 17 reports data for only those students in the sample and in LAUSD. This data also shows that there is only a significantly higher percent of PLP third graders scoring at or above the 50th NPR in math as compared to Non-PLP third graders, while for language arts and reading the percent of PLP students is slightly lower but not statistically different than Non-PLP third graders scoring at or above the 50th NPR. Overall, the mean percentile scores in language arts, math and reading on the SAT9 are lower for PLP third graders than Non-PLP third grade students.

To investigate the differences in performance on the SAT9 in language arts, reading and math one step further, we also ran regressions on these performance outcomes testing the differences between PLP and Non-PLP third graders controlling for student ethnicity, low income status, title 1 status, Limited English Proficient status, third grade class size, number of teachers taught third grade, teacher's emergency credential status, parent education, and employment status of the household. These are also preliminary findings. Table 19 provides the regression results of PLP's effect on SAT9 percentile scores in language arts, math, and reading. Primarily, third grade students in the LAUSD PLP schools scored 4.5 percentile points higher in reading on the SAT9 in 1998/99 than Non-PLP LAUSD students after controlling for student ethnicity, low income status, title 1 status, Limited English Proficient status, third grade class size, number of teachers taught third grade, teacher's emergency credential status, parent education, and employment status of the household. In addition, these analyses showed no differences for the math and language arts SAT9 scores between the PLP and Non-PLP LAUSD students.

In addition, we investigated the relationship between these SAT9 performance outcomes and parent activities that involve parents in their child's school and academics. Parent involvement activities such as attending parent conferences, visiting the classroom, volunteering in the classroom, attending school-wide events, and providing reading support or homework support to their children in the home has varying effects on student's academic performance and achievement even when controlling for student and teacher characteristics

(refer to Table 20 for regression results for SAT9 scores and Table 21 for regression results on teachers estimated outcomes). Controlling for student ethnicity, low income status, title 1 status, Limited English Proficient status, third grade class size, number of teachers taught third grade, teacher's emergency credential status, parent education, and employment status of the household, the evaluation found the following relationships: Reading support in the home has a positive effect on LAUSD math SAT9 scores. Parents visiting the classroom, volunteering in the classroom, and contacting the teacher is associated with increases in student's reading comprehension (measured in the Spring 1999). Both reading support in the home and parents visiting the classroom, volunteering in the classroom, and contacting the teacher are positively related to LAUSD language arts SAT9 scores. Parents presence at school-wide events is negatively related to a student's standing in math and a student's standing in reading decoding skills (both are measured in Spring 1999 and regressions also control for their standing in the Fall). Homework support also is negatively related to a student's standing in reading decoding skills and reading level on running records (both are measured in Spring 1999 and regressions also control for their standing in the Fall). However none of these differences are attributable specifically to PLP or Non-PLP participation. These are overall relationships found between parent involvement and third grade achievement. These relationships will be investigated further.

Conclusions and Recommendations

The evaluation results indicate positive changes in teachers and parents of third graders in PLP schools. Parents and teachers in PLP schools have a higher acceptance their joint responsibility for children getting a good education. Overall, there is less of decline in parent involvement and support by parents in PLP schools as their child moves from second to third grade than in Non-PLP schools. Moreover, results show higher reading achievement in PLP schools than in non-PLP comparison schools, controlling for teacher and student characteristics. Math and language arts performance, disruptive behavior and academic habits, however, appeared unaffected by PLP. The links between specific PLP activities, positive changes in parents and teachers, and student performance are not clear and need further study.

Brief Overview of Limitations and Barriers in the Current Policy Context

PLP aims to impact teachers and parents in schools faced with many challenges and policy changes. In the last several years, schools across the state were required to reduce their class sizes in all grades K-3. By 1997-98, 91 percent of second grade cohorts in Los Angeles county had experienced at least one year of reduced classes, as had 60 percent of third graders (LACOE, Vol.6 No.3 May 99). This meant hiring many new and non-credentialed teachers to join current school staff. Moreover, less affluent schools were much more likely to have a high percentage of untrained teachers (LACOE, Vol. 6 No 2, May 99). Class size reduction also meant finding the space for new classrooms for these new teachers and classes, which particularly strained the facilities and efforts in the largest and poorest urban districts, including LAUSD and LBUSD (LACOE, Vol.6 No.3 May 99). In addition, state funds were cut for professional development days from providing 6 days to 1 day. This left schools and principals with a

limited ability to schedule formal professional development days for all teachers targeting parent involvement. Within this context of change, LAAMP and the PLP schools still worked to provide professional development time for teachers on parental involvement, establish lending libraries somewhere on the school campus, and not lose their parent center space where parent education is offered to parents. Other policy changes, such as Proposition 227 that ended bilingual education, also diverted schools', teachers' and parents' attention and efforts on reforming and improving children's learning environments.

Given these pressures and strains on schools and parents from other directions, PLP attempted to change the behavior of teachers and parents. PLP aimed to establish a solid groundwork of communication between parents and teachers. Many parents to whom PLP schools were trying to reach out and involve are very busy, have several children, work full-time, and speak another language other than English. PLP was attempting to change parents' interactions with their children at home. PLP schools were trying to engage teachers in conversations about the importance of parental involvement and change teacher's behavior and practice in the classroom. PLP was trying to reestablish parent involvement on the school campus and in the classroom as a higher priority for parents and for teachers. These are very ambitious and tough goals to achieve given the constraints and context.

Given the goals of the School Families and their progress in implementing PLP, there are several recommendations for how LAAMP and the School Families could strengthen the impact of their efforts:

LAAMP and PLP are reaching some of the teachers and parents in some of their schools but again they need to reaffirm to their School Families the need for significant, coordinated learning opportunities for teachers and parents to increase meaningful parent involvement in schools to support students' learning. Professional development and parent education needs to reach *all* teachers and *all* parents if they are going to continue to influence and improve the quantity and quality of the communication between parents and teachers. Increased parental involvement appears to start with increased parent-teacher communication and parent-teacher interaction.

Moreover, half of the teachers in PLP schools who are motivated to involve parents in their classrooms felt that their schools were not preparing them on how to involve parents. This needs to be addressed in a concerted and consistent manner in the schools. Engaging teachers in the process of developing strategies for involving parents could provide the necessary buy-in and sufficient detail by grade-level to prove successful.

PLP teachers are starting to use the voicemail system in their schools to communicate with their students' parents. But the voicemail is primarily being used as a device for parents to leave messages for. This is a very limited use of the capabilities of the voicemail system, particularly considering its expense and installation. Teachers and staff in PLP schools may need additional training on the broad uses of voicemail.

With a restricted number of professional development days and limited resources, it is a tough choice for principals and districts to provide the necessary

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preparation for teachers regarding parent involvement. LAAMP and PLP need to re-iterate this need, particularly to principals and district leaders. Furthermore, specific strategies involving parents in their child's academics, engaging parents to visit or help in the classroom, and effectively communicating with parents need to be discussed and supported through informal processes at the school, especially if formal professional development time is limited. Equipping teachers with better strategies on how to encourage parents to visit the classroom and take an active role in understanding what their child is to be learning during the school year is a first big step. This is not to say that professional development needs to be separate from professional development on curriculum, instruction, and other important school reform topics, but rather could be integrated as an important element within these other opportunities. Integrating parent involvement as a serious topic into professional development on curriculum and instructional issues could be another way to provide these types of strategies to teachers and reinforce the importance of such actions. The point is that teachers are not going to change their practices unless there is support for their learning and changes in expectations in these areas.

Some parents in the PLP schools are attending workshops finding them valuable. However more parents still need to be reached. Parent education in PLP schools needs to be more than business as usual. Offering parent education is not sufficient to ensure effective communication with parents or parent participation in these opportunities. Contact with parents needs to be broadened from a small group of parents to <u>all</u> parents. Contact with parents also needs to be deepened by the schools and by the teachers. School-wide or School Family-wide strategies need to be developed to combat some of the barriers to parent participation at the schools, in the classrooms, and to attending workshops. PLP and its schools also should design strategies on how to more effectively recruit parents.

School Families should recognize the large role teachers and other school staff can play in contacting parents, encouraging their participation on campus and in the classroom, as well as in strengthening parents' relationships to schools. Professional development for teachers and direct encouragement from school administration and staff will be necessary to increase parent presence at the schools and in the classroom. School staff and teachers need to take an active role and feel it is part of their responsibility to encourage parents to attend parent workshops and visit their children's classroom if parental participation is going to increase at the schools.

Parent conferences are heavily attended across the School Families and many parents are on campus for other school-wide events, particularly as student move from second grade to third grade. This parent presence at the schools would be a good place for teachers particularly, but also other school staff, to engage parents in discussions about the benefits of parent education workshops, reading practices at home, and communicating with them more frequently about the progress of their child. This dialogue between a parent and a teacher is a key to eventually building a supportive learning environment and increasing student achievement.

In sum, PLP has made progress at various levels. Schools raised their level of consciousness about the importance of parental involvement and have set firmer goals. More teachers are engaging in professional development targeted toward parent involvement. Parent education continues to be offered at the schools, and parent satisfaction with the workshops has increased. Parents are contacting and visiting their children's classroom more often. More parents are supporting homework and reading regularly with their children at home. To take advantage of these changes and to improve student achievement, PLP schools need to translate these small changes into a more substantial increase in parental participation at the school and in the classroom. They also need to work to change the current one-way pattern of parent-teacher communication, with teachers passing on information, to a meaningful two-way communication about academics. Only these more dramatic changes will provide the type of supportive learning environment necessary to improve student performance and behavior. These changes will require a more concerted and intense effort to reach *all* teachers and *all* parents in LAAMP, PLP and the School Families.

Table 1: Professional Development Targeting Parent Involvement

	Non-PLP Spring [illegible]	PLP Spring [illegible]
N=	426	413
	Percentage said Yes	
Does Professional Development Currently Exist?		
Yes	34.6*	70.2*
No, But Planned	3.0	2.1
No, Not Planned	45.7*	21.4*
Of those who said professional development exits, percent who participated	72.0*	80.0*
Of those who said professional development exits, which parent involvement topics covered		
General Parent involvement	2.1*	15.4*
Parents helping with Homework	7.1	5.4
Parent classes	7.1	5.0
Volunteering	11.4	9.0
All of the above	39.3*	30.1*
Of those who said professional development exits, Location it was held		
Staff meetings	90.0*	57.5*
Professional Development Session	0.0*	25.2*

NOTE: Percentages are based on the number of students whose teachers responded to the survey.

* Non-PLP is statistically different than PLP at p=0.01 level.

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Table 2: Existence and Use of Voicemail in PLP and Non-PLP schools

Voicemail		Non-PLP	PLP
		Spring 1999	Spring 1999
	N=	426	413
		Percentage said Yes	
Percent who said voicemail exists at their school		13.6*	51.8*
Percent who said they use voicemail		0*	72.2*
Of percent who said they use voicemail,			
Percent used to leave parents messages		N/A	71.8

NOTE: Percentages are based on the number of students whose teachers responded to the survey.

* Non-PLP is statistically different than PLP at p=0.01 level.

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Table 3: Third Grade Teachers' Beliefs about Parent Involvement

	Non PLP		PLP	
	FALL 1998	Spring 1999	FALL 1998	Spring 1999
N=	442	426	433	413
	Percentage Said Yes			
Parent involvement is necessary for children to learn	82.8*	73.4	72.2*	79.3
No matter what it takes, getting parents involved in their children s education is worth the effort	60.0*	60.5*	68.3*	69.0*
The time it takes to get parents involved in their children's education is sometimes not worth the effort	36.5	2.7	30.8	3.3
The school is encouraging parental involvement, but is not preparing teachers on how to involve parents	74.3*	78.5*	53.4*	65.3*

* Non-PLP is statistically different than PLP at p=0.01 level.

Table 4: Communication between Third Grade Teachers and Parents

	Non PLP		PLP	
	FALL 1998	Spring 1999	FALL 1998	Spring 1999
N=	442	426	433	413
	Percentage Said Yes			
Teacher did not contact parent with positive feedback or behavior problem	--	36.1	--	37.3
Contacted parent to give positive feedback about child	--	42.9	--	46.0
Contacted parent regarding behavior problem	--	14.0	--	17.8
Quality of communication Teacher has with parent:				
Primarily for information purposes only	40.4	34.7	41.9	30.5
Interactive, two-way communication	24.7	13.0*	29.1	30.8*
Poor / no communication	21.6*	27.8	15.6*	23.9

* Non-PLP is statistically different than PLP at p=0.01 level.

Table 5: Parents' Communication with Child's Second Grade & Third Grade Teacher

	Non PLP		PLP	
	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]
N=	371	297	302	306
	Percentage Said Yes			
Gives positive feedback	_	73	_	77
Sends home child's work for review	_	87	_	87
Calls you on the phone / send note	_	83	_	69
Contact child's teacher	74*	84*	84*	80*
Contact teacher by phone (including times left message):				
Everyday**	_	12.9*	_	8.7*
Several times**	_	10.6*	_	3.5*
Call voice mail:				
Everyday	_	1	_	1
Several times	_	0	_	1
Call school / teacher for homework				
Everyday	_	16*	_	6*
Several times	_	4*	_	12*

* Non-PLP is statistically different than PLP at p=0.01 level.

** The scale was: 1 = Every day; 2 = Several times a week; 3 = Several times a month; 4 = Never / Hardly ever; 5 = Don't know.

Table 6:

Access & Use of Parent Education Workshops, School Newsletter, & Parent Center

	Non PLP		PLP	
	1988	1989	1988	1989
N=	371	297	302	306
	Percentage Said Yes			
Access				
School offers parent training/ workshops	80*	–	91*	–
Have a school newsletter/ bulletin	82*	92	91*	95
Have access to parent center	59*	58	72*	58
Use				
Attend parent training/ workshop	32*	19	40*	23
Attend computer training	20	8*	19	12*
Visit parent center	44*	33	62*	33
Workshop attendance by topic:				
Parent skills	–	24*	–	31*
Helping child with school work	–	18*	–	28*
Communicating with teacher and staff	–	16*	–	27*
Understanding what is expected of the child	–	17*	–	24*
Learning parent/child activities for the home	–	17*	–	26*
Introduction to school policies and programs	–	17*	–	27*

* Non-PLP is statistically different than PLP at p=0.01 level.

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Table 7: Satisfaction with Parent Education Workshops, School Newsletter, & Parent Center

	Non PLP		PLP	
N=	371	297	302	306
	% of those who used			
Satisfaction of those who use these services:				
Parent Training is helpful / worth my time	64*	–	82*	–
Parent center is valuable resource	92	–	96	–
Newsletter / bulletin keeps me informed	97	–	98	–
	% of those who attended			
Indicated as "helpful" to those who attended:				
Parent skills	–	85	–	83
Helping child with school work	–	77*	–	91*
Communicating with teacher and staff	–	74*	–	91*
Understanding what is expected of the child	–	76*	–	95*
Learning parent / child activities for the home	–	76*	–	97*
Introduction to school policies and programs	–	84*	–	93*

* Non-PLP is statistically different than PLP at p=0.01 level.

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Table 8: Third Grade Parents' Beliefs about Parent Involvement

	Non PLP		PLP	
	1998	1999	1998	1999
N=	371	297	302	306
	Percentage Said Yes			
Is mainly the school and teacher's job to make sure child gets good education	_	7	_	9
Is mainly the family and home's job to make sure child gets good education	_	7	_	7
Is both school and family's job, to make sure child gets good education	_	45*	_	59*
Is both school and family's job to make sure child gets good education, but it is more the job of the school and teachers	_	28*	_	16*
Is both school and family's job to make sure child gets good education, but it is more the job of the parent	_	13*	_	9*

* Non-PLP is statistically different than PLP at p=0.01 level.

Table 9: Parent Involvement in the Classroom as Reported by the Teacher

	Non PLP		PLP	
	FALL 1998	Spring 1999	FALL 1998	Spring 1999
N=	442	426	433	413
	Percentage Said Yes			
Teacher evaluation of parents' involvement with child:				
Parent is somewhat involved in their child's academic performance	38.3	27.5*	35.5	35.9*
Parent is very involved in their child's academic performance	27.4	21.5*	31.7	27.3*
Parent volunteered (at least once)	--	10.0	--	10.3
Parent visited or helped in classroom (at least once)	--	43.0		41.2

* Non-PLP is statistically different than PLP at p=0.01 level.

Table 10: Parents' Involvement in the School & Classroom for PLP and Non-PLP

	Non PLP		PLP	
	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]
N=	371	297	302	306
	Percentage Said Yes			
Visit/Help in classroom	62	39*	62	47*
Parent conference	78*	91	83*	92
Open house/Back-to-school night	71	82*	69	78*
Student performance/sport event/awards ceremony	64*	73*	70*	76*
Number of school staff other than child's teacher with whom parents are acquainted	3.5	2.4	3.6	2.5

* Non-PLP is statistically different than PLP at p=0.01 level.

Table 11: Parents' Interaction with their Child

	Non PLP		PLP	
	[redacted]	[redacted]	[redacted]	[redacted]
N=	371	297	302	306
	Percentage Said Yes			
Check child's back pack for notes				
Everyday**	–	53*	–	18*
Several times a week**	–	47*	–	26*
Talk about school				
Everyday	50*	75	65*	77
Several times a week	40*	20	30*	18
Do chores together				
Everyday	38*	34	54*	32
Several times a week	45*	37	37*	30
Go to the library				
Everyday	–	7	–	8
Several times a week	–	11	–	15
Number of library books checked out in regular outing	–	3 bks	–	3bks
Borrow books or other educational materials from the school	–	67*	–	73*

* Non-PLP is statistically different than PLP at p=0.01 level.

** The scale was: 1 = Every day; 2 = Several times a week; 3 = Several times a month; 4 = Never / Hardly ever; 5 = Don't know.

Table 12: Parents' Structure at Home surrounding Homework

	Non-PLP		PLP	
	1998	1999	1998	1999
Limit TV hours N=	371	297	302	306
Average TV hours during school week	72*	80*	86*	57*
Have time and place for homework	–	4 hrs	–	4 hrs
Actually does homework in special time:	83*	92	89*	89
Everyday**				
Several times**	–	82	–	85
How often review homework:	–	15	–	13
Everyday				
Several times	–	62*	–	70*
How often help child with homework:	–	30*	–	24*
Every day				
Several times a week	38*	50	70*	51
How often sign and return homework to teacher:	31*	27	27*	28
Everyday				
Several times	–	39*	–	25*
How often child s homework requires participation to complete it:	–	27*	–	36*
Everyday				
Several times	–	39	–	43
Parents or other adults should:	–	36	–	32
Help with homework				
Only check homework	63*	53*	73*	70*
Not intertere with homework	29*	46*	25*	30*
	8*	0*	2*	0*

* Non-PLP is statistically different than PLP at p=0.01 level.

** The scale was: 1 = Every day; 2 = Several times a week; 3 = Several times a month; 4 = Never / Hardly ever; 5 = Don't know.

Table 13: Parents' Habits surrounding Reading with their Child

	Non PLP		PLP	
	1998	1999	1998	1999
N=	371	297	302	306
	Percentage Said Yes			
Have books in home in English	80	98	84	94
Read to child in English	73	95	76	96
Someone reads regularly to child in home	80*	–	91*	–
Reading with your child:				
Every day**	44*	29	53*	34
Several times a week**	40*	32*	38*	52*
Availability of someone to help child with reading :				
Every day	–	30	–	34
Several times a week	–	32	–	34
Availability of someone to help child with reading or homework:				
Every day	75*	–	83*	–
Several times a week	17	–	16	–
Reading aloud with your child in English:				
Everyday	–	74	–	70
Several times a week	–	13	–	18
Reading aloud with your child in language other than English:				
Everyday	–	29	–	34
Several times a week	–	32*	–	52*
Have your child tell you a story that he or she read:				
Everyday	–	23	–	26
Several times a week	–	29	–	30

* Non-PLP is statistically different than PLP at p=0.01 level.

** The scale was: 1 = Every day; 2 = Several times a week; 3 = Several times a month; 4 = Never / Hardly ever; 5 = Don t know.

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Table 14: Academic Standing of Third Graders in Sample

	Non PLP		PLP	
	1998	1999	1998	1999
N=	371	297	302	306
	Percentage			
Standing in reading –decoding				
Middle 20% or above	69.8	73.6	70.7	77.2
Bottom 20% or above	15.6	13.8	16.3	12.7
Standing in Reading –Comprehension				
Middle 20% or above	-	73.5	-	75.4
Bottom 20% or above	-	13.4	-	11.4
Child regularly completes reading homework…				
Moderately well to very well	79.5	30.5	84.3	32.7
Not at all	5.3	46.8	3.9	48.4
Standing in Reading -Homework performance				
Middle 20% or above	77.0	76.7	74.1	76.8
Bottom 20% or above	8.2	13.6	14.1	10.6
Standing in Math –Overall				
Middle 20% or above	75.4	77.5	76.2	79.3
Bottom 20% or above	9.5	10.9	12.1	10.6
Child regularly completes math homework…				
Moderately well to very well	84.7	25.4*	83.7	31.7*
Not at all	3.3	47.0	5.0	48.9
Standing in Math- Homework performance				
Middle 20% or above	77.6	78.5	77.2	78.5
Bottom 20% or above	8.2	11.4	12.1	10.6

NOTE: Percentages are based on the number of students whose teachers responded to the survey.

* Non-PLP is statistically different than PLP at p=0.01 level.

Table 15: Academic Behaviors of Third Graders in Sample

	Non PLP		PLP	
	1998	1999	1998	1999
N=	371	297	302	306
	Percent			
Disruptive Behavior is a moderate to very serious problem	18.2	17.0	16.5	17.0
Disruptive Behavior is not a problem	60.8	58.0	59.6	62.4
Poor work habits in **reading**	24.7*	20.0	18.0*	20.0
Poor work habits in **math**	20.7	25.7	17.4	25.7
Poorly motivated to achieve in **reading** is a moderate to serious problem	18.3	19.2	14.1	16.2
Poorly motivated to achieve in **reading** is not a problem	58.2*	57.8*	69.2*	61.7*
Poorly motivated to achieve in **math** is a moderate to serious problem	18.7	18.4	14.3	16.3
Poorly motivated to achieve in **math** is not a problem	59.0*	60.4	66.3*	62.7

NOTE: Percentages are based on the number of students whose teachers responded to the survey.

* Non-PLP is statistically different than PLP at p=0.01 level.

Table 16: Percent at or above the 50th NPR on the SAT9 for Third Graders

	Non PLP		PLP	
	%	N	%	N
	1998/1999 School Year			
Percent at or above 50th NPR in Language Arts	17.9	645	22.9	661
Percent at or above 50th NPR in Math	20.4*	656	26.1*	693
Percent at or above 50th NPR in Reading	12.8	636	16.5	676

* Non-PLP is statistically different than PLP at p=0.01 level.

Table 17: Percent at or above the 50th NPR on the SAT9 for Third Graders in Sample for LAUSD only

	Non PLP		PLP	
	%	N	%	N
	1998/1999 School Year			
Percent at or above 50th NPR in Language Arts	20.0	225	17.2	234
Percent at or above 50th NPR in Math	20.6*	234	25.8*	257
Percent at or above 50th NPR in Reading	17.0	234	12.9	243

* Non-PLP is statistically different than PLP at p=0.01 level.

Table 18: Mean Percentile on SAT9 for Third Graders in Sample for LAUSD only

	Non PLP		PLP	
	Mean NPR	N	Mean NPR	N
	1998 / 1999 School Year			
Language Arts	37.3	225	32.9	234
Math	28.8*	234	20.6*	257
Reading	33.8*	234	25.4*	243

* Non-PLP is statistically different than PLP at p=0.01 level.

Table 19:

Estimations of SAT9 Percentile Score in Language Arts, Math, & Reading for Third Grade Sample (LAUSD Only) Controlling for Student & Teacher characteristics – PRELIMINARY FINDINGS

1998/99 N=439	SAT9 Score Language Arts	SAT9 Score Math	SAT9 Score Reading
Coefficient on **PLP dummy**	3.6	0.06	4.5
T-statistic	(1.682)	(0.030)	(2.485)

NOTE: All regressions controlled for student ethnicity, low income status, title 1 status, Limited English Proficient status, third grade class size, number of teachers taught third grade, teacher's emergency credential status, parent education, and employment status of the household.

Table 20:

Estimations of SAT9 Percentile Score in Language Arts, Math, & Reading for Third Grade Sample (LAUSD Only) Controlling for Student & Teacher characteristics– PRELIMINARY FINDINGS

1998/99 N=439	SAT9 Score Language Arts	SAT9 Score Math	SAT9 Score Reading
Coefficient on **Parent-Teacher Conference Attendance**	-0.88	2.48	-3.86
T-statistic	(-0.25)	(0.67)	(-1.29)
Coefficient on **Parents' Presence at School-wide Events**	0.20	0.41	0.21
T-statistic	(0.58)	(1.14)	(0.79)
Parents' Visiting, Volunteering , & Contacting Teacher	0.23	0.04	0.06
T-statistic	(1.96)	(0.33)	(0.68)
Coefficient on **Reading Support**	**0.98**	**1.21**	0.54
T-statistic	**(2.59)**	**(3.04)**	(1.77)
Coefficient on **Home support**	0.64	0.43	0.47
T-statistic	(1.76)	(1.12)	(1.58)
Coefficient on **Homework dummy**	-0.20	0.09	0.22
T-statistic	(-0.34)	(0.14)	(0.76)

NOTE: All regressions controlled for student ethnicity, low income status, title 1 status, Limited English Proficient status, third grade class size, number of teachers taught third grade, teacher's emergency credential status, parent education, and employment status of the household.

Table 21:

Estimations of Student Performance for Third Grade Sample (LAUSD Only)
Controlling for Student & Teacher characteristics– PRELIMINARY FINDINGS

1998/99 N=439	Math Standing Spring	Reading Level Spring	Reading Decoding Spring	Reading Com-prehension
Coefficient on **Parent-Teacher Conference Attendance**	-0.05	0.025	-0.04	0.18
T-statistic	(-0.54)	(0.31)	(-0.47)	(1.24)
Coefficient on **Parents' Presence at School-wide Events**	**-0.02**	-0.04	**-0.03**	-0.02
T-statistic	**(-2.05)**	(-0.43)	**(-2.41)**	(-0.99)
Parents' Visiting, Volunteering , & Contacting Teacher	-0.03	-0.02	0.01	**0.02**
T-statistic	(-0.87)	(-0.92)	(0.49)	**(2.47)**
Coefficient on **Reading Support**	0.01	**-0.02**	-0.08	0.04
T-statistic	(0.83)	**(-2.35)**	(-0.68)	(0.24)
Coefficient on **Home support**	-0.07	-0.04	-0.01	-0.02
T-statistic	(-0.61)	(-0.43)	(-1.11)	(-0.15)
Coefficient on **Homework dummy**	-0.01	**-0.03**	**-0.04**	-0.04
T-statistic	(-0.58)	**(-2.23)**	**(-2.66)**	(-1.56)

NOTE: All regressions controlled for student ethnicity, low income status, title I status, Limited English Proficient status, third grade class size, number of teachers taught third grade, teacher's emergency credential status, parent education, and employment status of the household.

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Appendix A: Evaluation Design and Comparison Group Methodology

The evaluation, along with much social science research and evaluation work, is limited in the extent to which it can attribute connections between observed processes and conditions to observed effects since there are many uncontrolled variables likely to affect the outcomes in the targeted sites. Our evaluation design, however, uses quasi-experimental methods in addition to the longitudinal tracking of parent-child pairs to provide a rigorous solution to this problem.

This study utilizes a quasi-experimental design to collect longitudinal data on parents of a cohort of elementary students and their subsequent teachers in schools participating in PLP and in schools similar to, but not participating in PLP. This type of data allows us to describe the differences in the above-mentioned areas across parents of students in schools with PLP and in schools without PLP, and to test for the statistical significance between the two populations of parents.

The first year of the evaluation focused on tracking the implementation of the parent involvement programs in all of the sites including the 12 evaluation sites, as well as documenting the initial changes in parents and teachers in the 12 evaluation sites. This was primarily accomplished with site visits and interviews in all of the schools, as well as a parent phone survey[8] in both the program and comparison schools. The site visits and interviews were conducted formally in November/December 1997 with the LAAMP School Family Coordinator, PLP Coordinator, Parent Center Staff (if applicable), Principal, and a select group of 4 teachers, primarily third grade teachers. Informal follow-up interviews were also conducted in November/December of 1998. Furthermore, a parent phone survey was conducted with a random sample of 673 parents with a child in second grade in both the program and comparison schools; 603 of these parents were surveyed again when their child reached third grade. Parents had a designated target child so that if they have more than one child they only responded for the target child. The parents were interviewed by phone in the spring of 1998 and spring of 1999. The parent phone survey tracks changes in parents' awareness and knowledge of activities at the school and in their child's classroom; their behaviors and attitudes toward the teachers of their children and the school; the frequency and content of the communication with their child's teachers; and the interactions the parents have with their child at home with regards to such activities as reading, homework, and watching TV. The findings from these two data collection efforts are provided in this report.

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[8] The parent phone survey was designed to target a random sample of elementary school parents. The sample of 1200 parents was drawn from 12 schools—six PLP program schools and six Non-PLP comparison schools. We planned to interview 60 parents of second graders and 40 parents of third through fifth graders at each school. Of the 12 schools, 6 are program schools and 6 are comparison schools. The phone survey was conducted by trained parents from within the same school family but not the same school as their child. We planned on needing 90 parent interviewers and to have 7-8 parents per school to interview 13-15 parents. With an 80% response rate, the 7-8 parent interviewers at each school would interview 10-11 parents and the sample size would be approximately 960 parents.

The focus of the last year of the evaluation, 1998-99, is both on the further implementation of the program and on the impact of the program on students, teachers, and parents. This is achieved by tracking the cohort of parent and child pairs over time as the children move from second into third grade in both PLP and Non-PLP comparison schools as well as by surveying these children's third grade teachers. The cohort of parent-child pairs being tracked reflect a random sample of second graders' parents who were interviewed in 1997-98 who in 1998-99 had children in the third grade. The parent-child sample was freshened in 1999. Teacher surveys were also conducted twice a year with the teachers of the target children. For example, in 1998-99 we surveyed all third grade teachers who were teaching children from the sample. The teacher survey focused on gaining information on the children's grades, behavior in class, motivation levels, etc. Teachers provide information on their classroom practices, parent involvement in the classroom, and parent-teacher interactions.

This design of tracking parent-child pairs, as well as surveying the child's teacher in both program and comparison schools has several notable characteristics. First, it allows for information to be collected about the child from both the parent and the teacher. This helps validate and cross check the findings. This evaluation strategy also allows for the comparison of children over time who have parents in a parent involvement program group and those who have parents in a comparison group within the same school district. This type of comparison is able to identify both the trajectory of a child's behavior and progress as well as the trajectory of their parent's involvement in the school and in the classroom in schools with and without the PLP parental involvement program intervention. This allows for an evaluation of the impact of the parent involvement program on the child, the parents, and the teachers.

Furthermore, this design makes a few assumptions. This design assumes that the concern is to evaluate how all parents from the most to the least involved at the start of the program change as a result of the program. For example, this design has a broader focus than perhaps only tracking longitudinally a sample of parents who are actively participating in the program the first year. The tracking of the actively participating parents in the first year would evaluate whether and how their participation in program activities change over time and how these parents see the program influencing their home activities, attitudes toward school, expectations, etc. This design, on the other hand, tracks all parents with varying degrees of program participation.

Selection of the Twelve Schools

There were two program schools chosen from each of the PLP school families and a matched comparison school for each program school chosen from within the same school district, making 12 schools total. The selection of these 12 schools required various steps. First, the PLP schools were selected from within their school family to represent the range of parent involvement efforts in the School Family. Next, matched comparison schools were chosen for each of the PLP schools.

To inform the selection of the PLP program schools, several parent involvement questions from the LAAMP teacher survey (Spring 1997) were

analyzed for those PLP schools which took the survey.[9] In addition, the PLP interview protocols for the principal, PLP site coordinator and teachers were reviewed for details of the parent involvement efforts at the school. This informed the initial selection of program schools. Once the initial program schools were selected, interviews with the School Family coordinators were conducted. In these interviews, School Family coordinators ranked the schools according to their levels of parent involvement, described various details of the parent involvement efforts at each of the schools, as well as discussed the appropriateness and representativeness of the initially selected schools for the given School Family. In the end, two PLP elementary schools were selected from each School Family to be PLP program schools based on their ability to represent the range of parent involvement efforts within their School Family.

To select a matched comparison school for each PLP program school, we first needed to determine the pool of potential schools. In LAUSD, the potential matched comparison schools were those schools which were involved in LAAMP school reform efforts, but not part of PLP; however, in Long Beach the pool of schools involved in LAAMP school reform efforts did not contain enough schools with similar characteristics to make a sufficient match[10]. Therefore, the pool of potential match schools for LAUSD were all of the Non-PLP LAAMP School Family elementary schools with similar teacher and student populations, as well as parent involvement efforts. The pool of potential match schools for LBUSD were all Non-PLP elementary schools in LBUSD with similar teacher and student populations, as well as parent involvement efforts.

Several sources of information were compared to find a suitable match for each selected PLP school: parent involvement items; self-reported teacher demographics and teacher-reported student and classroom level information from the LAAMP Teacher Survey; school-level student information from the California Basic Education Data System (CBEDS); and district provided test score information.

Teacher and student demographics were compared for each PLP program school against each of the potential match schools within their given district. These comparisons determined which, if any, schools had teacher characteristics or student/classroom characteristics that were significantly different from those at the PLP program school. For each PLP school, the three or four schools, which had very few significant differences, i.e., schools which were the most similar across the examined characteristics, were deemed as candidate schools. For these candidate schools, CBEDS information and district provided information was also compared. Note that one of the PLP families in Los Angeles did not participate in the LAAMP Teacher Survey and as a result only had a limited amount of information available from CBEDS to select the matched comparison schools.

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[9] Several PLP elementary schools did not participate in the LAAMP Teacher Survey (Spring 1997).

[10] The other LAAMP schools in LBUSD were economically very different from the LBUSD PLP schools and were therefore deemed not suitable for matches.

The analysis of these data informed the initial selection of three or four potential match comparison schools for each PLP program school. Once the initial set of matched comparison schools were selected, informal interviews with the School Family coordinators were conducted. In these interviews, School Family coordinators ranked the three or four potential schools according to their levels of parent involvement efforts; described various details of the parent involvement efforts at each of the schools; as well as discussed the appropriateness and willingness of the initially selected comparison schools to participate in the PLP evaluation. Using all this information the candidates were ranked. Final selection was based on the willingness to participate.

The next step was to contact the schools to confirm their participation. We contacted the principals of the schools and explained to them the requirements and benefits of participating in the evaluation. All 12 schools were contacted in February 1998 and schedules were discussed for data collection procedures. Due to the extraordinary busy schedule one of the comparison schools we postponed the administration of the survey from April until May 1998 to accommodate their needs.

Data Sources and Collection Procedures

Interviews and site visits. The site visits and interviews were conducted once in November/December 1997 with the LAAMP School Family Coordinator, PLP Coordinator, Parent Center Staff (if applicable), Principal, and a selected group of 4 teachers preferably third grade teachers. There were approximately 60 elementary teachers in grades 2 through 4 interviewed at the 12 schools. The interviews focused on the existence of parent involvement activities prior to PLP and the implementation of PLP goals. For example, administrators were asked what their schools and school families intended to accomplish with PLP; what programmatic supports were considered desirable; and to what extent their plans were actually being implemented in the first year. Moreover, teachers were asked to explain how they contacted parents and what professional development they received for parent involvement.

Parent phone survey. The purpose of the 1998 spring and 1999 spring PLP parent phone survey was to learn about parental expectations, attitudes, and behavior regarding their child's academic achievement, as well as parent participation levels, their satisfaction with the workshops on parenting or other related topics, and their communication with the school. In spring 1998, the parent phone survey consisted of 105 items and in spring 1999 it consisted of 98 items. Scales were used for parents to either 1) rate their level of agreement with specific statements, 2) indicate the frequency with which parents participate in parent/child activities, or 3) answer a yes/no question. The 1998 spring phone survey included an open-ended question asking parents to give their suggestions about how to improve the parent involvement programs at their children's school. The items for the 1998 and 1999 survey were developed from several sources: articles, discussions with PLP staff and other parent surveys, such as the LAUSD Annual Stakeholder Satisfaction survey. (Refer to Appendix B for a complete list of sources used to construct the PLP parent phone survey for spring 1998 and 1999.)

The parent phone survey was conducted with a random sample of 673 parents with a child in the second grade in both the program and comparison schools. A parent had a designated target child so that if they have more than one child they only responded for the target child. Sampling took place during the months of February and March (for 11 schools), and in June for one school. A hundred second graders were randomly selected using the emergency cards in the schools. If one hundred second graders were not available, we targeted the maximum number of second graders enrolled in the school.

In 1998, a total of 666 parents participated in the survey out of 1,265 sampled: 392 Non-PLP parents and 274 PLP parents participated. This is an overall response rate of 52.6 percent. The PLP response rate is 46.5 percent and Non-PLP is 57.9 percent. The primary reasons for non-response were non-working telephone numbers (31.4 percent) and refusals (10.2 percent). PLP and Non-PLP reasons for non-response were very similar. In the PLP schools, 64 percent of the 163 non-responses were due to wrong numbers, 25.1 percent due to refusals, and 10.4 percent due to no one being home. For Non-PLP schools, 70.3 percent of the 145 non-responses were due to wrong numbers, 18.4 percent due to refusals, and 11.0 percent due to no one being home. The overall response rates per school ranged from 44.6 percent to 78.1 percent. The individual school samples also ranged from 24 (out of the 56 sampled) to 82 (out of 105 sampled).

In 1999, a total of 605 parents participated in the survey out of 1,052 sampled: 298 Non-PLP parents and 307 PLP parents participated. This is an overall response rate of 57.5 percent. The PLP response rate is 60.6 percent and Non-PLP is 54.5 percent. The primary reasons for non-response were non-working telephone numbers (35.2 percent) and refusals (12.1 percent). In the PLP schools, 45.4 percent of the 176 non-responses were due to wrong numbers, 20.4 percent due to refusals, and 34.0 percent due to no one being home. For Non-PLP schools, 54.3 percent of the 236 non-responses were due to wrong numbers, 13.9 percent due to refusals, and 31.7 percent due to no one being home. The overall response rates per school ranged from 41.5 percent to 60.9 percent. The individual school samples also ranged from 22 (out of the 53 sampled) to 78 (out of 105 sampled).

Teacher survey. The purpose of the 1999 third grade teacher survey was to gain information on the children's grades, behavior in class, motivation levels, etc. Teachers also provided information on their classroom practices, parent involvement in the classroom, and parent-teacher interactions. The teacher survey consisted of 49 items. Scales were used for teachers to: 1) rate their level of agreement with specific statements; 2) indicate the frequency with which parents participated in certain activities; 3) answer a yes/no question about the their classroom; 4) rate the severity of a student's behavior; or 5) rate the level of a student's performance. The teacher survey included several open-ended questions asking teachers to describe their discipline practices in the classroom, their use of guided reading groups in reading instruction, indicate the books that they recommend to parents to read at home as well as which books they prefer to use in their classroom. The items for the teacher Fall 1998 and spring 1999 survey were developed from several sources: articles, discussions with PLP staff and other teacher surveys. In the Fall, 95 teachers were surveyed and in the Spring

94[11] teachers were surveyed. On average 8 teachers were surveyed at each school in the Fall and Spring although it ranged from 4 to 13 teachers across the schools. Each teacher evaluated on average 10 students in their class in the Fall and in the Spring, ranging from 8 to 13 students per teacher on average in the Fall and from 6 to 12 students per teacher on average in the Spring. In each school, an average of 72 students were evaluated in the Fall ranging from 38 to 99 and 70 students in the Spring ranging from 39 to 92.

School- and Student-level Achievement Data. Two sources were used to obtain achievement measures for the PLP and Non-PLP schools on the Stanford achievement test, the SAT9. School-level SAT9 test score information on the percent at or above the 50th percentile (NPR) in reading, math, and language arts for all students in the third grade at the 12 evaluation sites for Long Beach and Los Angeles Unified School Districts were aggregated and calculated from data tables provided by the California Department of Education web-site. Individual test score information for 1997/98 and 1998/99 was able to be obtained for only those students in the Los Angeles Unified School Districts and was provided by the Information Technology Department.

Data Analysis

These findings of this report are drawn primarily from three sources of data: 1) interviews with administrators and teachers from November/December 1997 on the goals and implementation of PLP as well as informal follow-up interviews over the course of November/December 1998; 2) the parent phone survey conducted in both the spring of 1998 and spring of 1999; and 3) the fall and spring 1999 Teacher Surveys with all third grade teachers. Interview data were summarized for Non-PLP and PLP comparison groups at the school and school family levels, by respondent group and by question. Basic descriptive statistics were computed for parent interview responses by school family and by school for Non-PLP and PLP comparison parents for each year. Basic descriptive statistics were also computed for teacher survey responses by school family and by school for Non-PLP and PLP comparison teachers and their classrooms for 1998/99 school year. The difference between the Non-PLP and PLP findings were tested for statistical significance (at the p=0.01 level) using a chi-square test or anova t-test, as appropriate. These tests indicate the probability that the observed differences are due to chance. Based on these analyses, the results that follow examine the similarities and differences between Non-PLP and PLP comparison parent responses as well as the Non-PLP and PLP comparison teacher responses about themselves and parents' third grade children.

Additionally, regression analyses were conducted to investigate the relationship between student achievement and parent involvement controlling for a variety of student and teacher characteristics. The Teacher Survey, Parent Phone Survey, and the LAUSD district data on achievement and demographics were merged. Basic descriptive statistics were computed overall and by PLP and Non-PLP for the achievement measures from the LAUSD district data, such as

[11] None of the teachers refused to take the PLP Teacher Survey in the Spring, however one teacher resigned and the students were placed in other classrooms.

percentile score on reading, math and language arts on the SAT 9 for 1997/98 and for 1998/99. Basic descriptive statistics were also computed for the performance and behavior outcomes reported by the teachers for the individual students in Fall 1998 and Spring 1999. Parent involvement measures were calculated for attendance at parent conferences, parents' presence at school-wide events, parents visiting the classroom, volunteering in the classroom, contacting the child's teacher, reading support at home, and homework support at home. Basic univariate regressions were conducted on all the behavior and performance outcomes comparing the PLP and Non-PLP students. These regressions were also then conducted controlling for student ethnicity, low income status, title 1 status, Limited English Proficient status, third grade class size, number of teachers taught third grade, teacher's emergency credential status, parent education, and employment status of the household. Additional multivariate regressions were conducted to understand the relationship between parent involvement and a student's behavior and performance in third grade controlling for background characteristics and the influence of PLP on these relationships.